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General Assembly
Seventy-second session

Official Records

6th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 19 September 2017, 6.10 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Laaksonen (Finland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Republic of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Republic of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sirisena (*spoke in Sinhalese; English text provided by the delegation*): I am very pleased to be able to congratulate the newly elected President of the General Assembly and to have the honour of addressing the Assembly at its seventy-second session, the third time I have done so as leader of Sri Lanka. The theme of this year's session is "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". Today, as we observe the various scenarios in play around the world, that slogan seems highly pertinent.

In 2015, before my election as President of Sri Lanka, I made a number of pledges to the people of my country. At that juncture, Sri Lanka's presidency had more executive power than the corresponding office in any other democratic system in the world. Since my election, the excessive executive powers of the presidency have been transferred to Parliament in accordance with my pledge. I believe that the concession and transfer by a leader of such power to another organ has set an example to my country and the world.

Those of us who are leaders of democratic countries must safeguard democracy and use our power to work to build a just society. However, events of the past few decades — indeed, of world history generally — have shown that many leaders are reluctant to yield power, resulting in discord, the disruption of peace and sometimes disputes at the international level as well. For myself, I have established democracy in my country and taken action to eliminate political groups with autocratic tendencies. I want to bring to the Assembly's attention my efforts to ensure democracy, safeguard human rights and nurture my people's fundamental rights during the past two and a half years.

My Government declared 2017 a year for poverty alleviation, with a view to freeing our country from the clutches of poverty, a major effort that I believe the entire world is engaged in. In that regard, we have launched a number of development programmes to strengthen the domestic economy.

We are all aware that for 30 years Sri Lanka suffered from a protracted conflict that crippled its

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economy. Terrorists advocating separatist ideologies wreaked havoc, but we were able to defeat them, establish democracy and begin to govern the country peacefully. But the economic legacy of the conflict was extremely detrimental to progress. We have learned the lessons of that conflict and are working to strengthen our domestic economy, promoting local industries and industrialization with a view to achieving economic development, while also fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals and making sustainable development a priority.

My country, like the rest of the world, including the United States of America, is being affected by unprecedented climate and weather conditions. In that regard, I believe that the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is crucial, and we should agree that ensuring its implementation is essential for humankind and the world.

Along with our national programme for poverty alleviation, I have launched a new movement, Grama Shakthi, as part of our clear vision and plan for consolidating the country's economy. We want to strengthen the local economy, develop local agriculture, take the country in a new direction and continue the economic plan between now and 2025 with rigour, with a view to achieving major changes in our economy.

As we know, children today are faced with many problems, not just in my country but all over the world. I have therefore launched a national programme in Sri Lanka to protect children. We have a mammoth task ahead of us in keeping our children safe from abuse and the drug manace. The protection of children is a matter of national and international importance, and implementing programmes to that end is therefore essential.

There is also much discussion in the world about protecting women's rights. A great deal of attention has been focused on the subject, and we have seen how women have been mistreated in certain societies. Women make up more than 52 per cent of Sri Lanka's population. We have worked to protect their rights by amending our Constitution to establish a mandatory 25 per cent quota for women candidates in local Government elections, one of several recently adopted amendments concerning major programmes, along with those protecting children and women's rights and preventing the threat posed by illegal drugs. We know that there is a need for an extensive global programme for preventing and controlling the threat posed by drugs. That issue has become a major challenge for every country and society, and I believe that all of humankind should join hands and come up with a joint programme to achieve that goal.

When my Government came to power in 2015, we were facing two major problems, one of which was our foreign debt crisis. Large sums of money were needed to repay our loans. On top of that, the Human Rights Council was considering allegations of human rights violations and raising serious concerns with regard to the then Government. Since then, however, we have been working to strengthen our domestic economy and attract foreign investment, and through these programmes have been successfully paying down our loans.

With regard to the resolutions adopted by the Human Rights Council in connection with allegations of human rights violations, my Government is now dealing with the issue and making resolving those problems a priority.

Consolidating democracy and protecting and nurturing human and fundamental rights constitute the pillars on which my Government has based its successful leadership of Sri Lanka and its efforts to establish a democratic society, and we will continue to strengthen those elements in the future. We have also worked to strengthen national reconciliation. Sri Lanka is home to people with different languages and different faiths, and we want to establish fellow feeling among the various groups and eliminate hatred, suspicion and mistrust, while building a society that is free of such problems.

While we must work to strengthen our country's economy and thereby promote prosperity, we also want to build a country that is disciplined and has high moral standards. The rule of law is of major importance in that regard, and my Government has prioritized the task of establishing the rule of law and ensuring its application. I should therefore emphasize that, while we are strengthening democracy, at the same time we are working to promote our people's human rights, nurture their basic rights and maintain friendly relations with other countries. Despite the divisions that have existed between Sri Lanka and some of its powerful allies, today we maintain good relations with those countries, and we very much appreciate the assistance of the United Nations in that regard.

As a State Member of the United Nations for approximately 62 years, Sri Lanka has abided by its rules and regulations and complied with its conventions, treaties and agreements. As a country with such a track record of compliance as a Member of the United Nations, we want those good relations to continue.

I want to ensure my country's independence and sovereignty in all that we do. In addressing the various allegations that have been made against us and dealing with the related problems, we have to move slowly and with enormous care. In that regard, certain extremist elements expect a fast pace. They want quick, short-term solutions, but our country is dealing with the legacy of a war that dragged on for 30 years and divided its people. We want to establish peace and unity, promote brotherhood among our people and eliminate hatred, suspicion and mistrust. If we are to achieve that, to build up a loving country and promote a prosperous economy, the assistance of Member States is of paramount importance. That is why I say that ours is a slow and steady pace, and in that connection, we call on Member States for their help. I believe that a rapid pace would be perilous at this juncture and the quick solution expected by certain extremist elements would be unlikely to solve our complex problems. I believe that everyone would agree with me in that regard.

Preventing the recurrence of war and promoting a sense of brotherhood among the various groups in my country, while ensuring each group's right to speak its own language and worship according to its own faith, are among my Government's goals. I respectfully appeal to the United Nations and to every nation to support us in realizing those goals. We want to promote economic prosperity, democracy and an end to war, and we want to consolidate our democracy and set an example to other nations. I am asking for assistance in achieving those goals.

I would like to conclude by congratulating the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, and may the noble Triple Gem bless us all.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Estonia.

Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Kaljulaid: Our world is unpredictable, and much of that unpredictability is the result of climate change. Climate change could be counterbalanced by rapid changes in our wasteful way of life, aided by technology. Clearly, although technological development — especially as it is illustrated by the rapidly developing digital technologies to which billions now have access — has a positive potential for transformation, it actually adds to the difficulties of understanding our future. This new world offers opportunities. Unfortunately, it also enhances the risks. To take advantage of the former and manage the latter, we need to take flexible and quick action, and on the global stage.

Estonia, a nation of just over 1 million inhabitants, is sensitive to the fact that those who are inherently weak — the poor, the disabled and the very young or very old — find it especially hard to cope with unpredictability. It is hard for those who have been rendered weak by discrimination, which is often the case for women and ethnic and religious minorities. Estonia itself has gone through a rapid transformation during the more than quarter century that has passed since it regained independence. As our economic and social statistics prove, we have done quite well in protecting our society's weaker groups, while rapidly adapting and growing our economy. We know it can be done.

We suffered for a long time from the international community's Hobbesian conviction that liberty could about bring chaos, and that bad leadership is better than no leadership. Our guiding principles have therefore been those of John Locke — the rule of law, checks and balances and individual rights. Notably, Locke had originally agreed with Hobbes, but changed his mind

while on a diplomatic mission observing civil society in Brandenburg, where, as he described it, differing ideas had the right to quietly coexist. That debate has continued into modern times.

We know how to offer our know-how on empathic, inclusive development at the global discussion table. Estonia is seeking election to the Security Council for the period from 2020 to 2021. As a small State that was occupied for 50 years of its 100-year history, Estonia is sensitive to the concerns of all States and people who lack the capacity to withstand global tides. Too many States in the world are suffering from unresolved conflicts, and they are States that could take care of their own peoples and contribute at the global level if we could more quickly manage the conflicts that are holding them back or, worse, threatening to tear them apart.

The ongoing military aggression in eastern Ukraine continues to stir up conflict and cause casualties among civilians, including the loss of a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. The Crimean peninsula is still occupied, as are parts of Georgia. There are protracted conflicts in Transnistria and Nagorno Karabakh. Many countries have been torn apart by tensions that we recognized but could not dissipate in time to avoid the worst.

The world has lost half a million people in Syria. Estonia supports the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011.

We cannot overlook the escalating suffering of the people of Yemen, or ignore the fate of the Rohingya people. We must put more effort into humanitarian action to combat the hunger, diseases and epidemics looming in various countries. Our common efforts to combat famine and hunger will also be crucial in South Sudan, Somalia and Nigeria.

Not every State is mobilizing its resources, efforts and technological advances for the benefit of its people. North Korea is an acute threat to world peace.

There are also considerable risks to global stability that are no longer linked to any specific State. The risk of terrorism is metastatic. Spawned initially by the disappointments and disillusionment of people from failed and failing States, it has spread globally. The key to successfully countering terrorism and violent extremism lies in our cooperation at all levels — national, regional and global. The Secretary-General's initiative to restructure the counter-terrorism architecture at the United Nations will render global efforts more coordinated and transparent. Effective counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights are mutually reinforcing, not conflicting, goals.

What I have just mentioned — and which has already been exacerbated by the real effects of climate change and, unfortunately, will be even more so in the future — has led to the highest number of displaced people the world has ever seen. As with all global challenges, the United Nations is the natural entity for working out and agreeing on a solution. Last year, we adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. We must address the root causes and drivers of irregular migration in order to improve border management and fight human trafficking, while also facilitating opportunities for legal migration. I would like to emphasize that the underlying basic values of our joint endeavours are humanism and solidarity. For Estonia, the importance of empathy for refugees who are fleeing the atrocities of war and destruction is a bitter lesson from our own history, when occupations and the Second World War dispersed our people around the world.

If we want to deal with the root causes of migration, we must tackle climate change, which has become the defining issue of our time. Joint efforts to combat climate change on a global scale would not be possible without the coordinating role of the United Nations and the platform offered by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). We have confidence in the Fiji presidency's ability to achieve concrete results during the twenty-third session of the Parties to the UNFCCC, to be held in November, building on last year's achievements in Paris.

As the response led by society to the threats of climate change shows, big, universal problems can be tackled by inclusive societies. Inclusive societies are fundamental to empathic and inclusive development. However, in recent years we have witnessed a shrinking of the space available to civil society. That trend must be reversed. One of the most prominent guarantees for empathic and inclusive development in democracy and the rule of law is the mainstreaming of gender equality in all areas of life. It is a proven fact that treating women

and men equally has a multiplier effect in eradicating poverty. Estonia's welfare development plan for 2016-2023 covers policy areas from employment and social inclusion to equal opportunities for applying our talents in all walks of life. Our goal is the balanced participation of women and men at all levels of decision-making and management, in both the public and the private sectors.

We should also not forget about gender balance in conflict situations. Engaging women in the early stages of prevention, crisis resolution and peacebuilding helps to reduce the probability of a relapse into violent conflict. We should therefore encourage women's participation in peace processes and acknowledge them as actors of change with great potential. And we must be tireless in implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions on women and peace and security at every level. The Peacebuilding Commission's adoption of a gender strategy last year was a major milestone on that road.

If women are to fully play their role in society, it is crucial to eliminate gender-based violence. We should ensure that its survivors are treated with dignity and that its perpetrators are held accountable for their crimes. Estonia continues to support actions that address gender-based violence and the reproductive-health needs of women and adolescent girls who are particularly vulnerable — for example, via the United Nations Population Fund in Ukraine and by supporting the #shedecides initiative. I am convinced that Secretary-General Guterres' commendable effort to bring more women into United Nations decision-making will also be an inspiration to women globally, and have a tangible effect on United Nations policy development, making it more empathic and inclusive.

Today, the use of information technology and the Internet is part of the everyday lives of people everywhere. Estonia can share its experience on how best to utilize e-governance to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals more efficiently and cheaply. We have been organizing an event series at the United Nations with the aim of introducing the well-established benefits of our e-governance to the international community, and we sincerely hope that they will lead to concrete action and partnerships. Moreover, this summer, Estonia and Singapore launched the Group of Friends on e-Governance and Cybersecurity. The Group's aim is to raise awareness, share best practices and promote capacity-building, at a time when such topics are becoming increasingly important at the United Nations level.

Digital change is everywhere. Its biggest effect right now is its ability to make geography obsolete. Attacks via cyberspace know no limits. Friendships and partnerships formed in the cybersphere know no borders. Globally, all these things diminish the distance between us. A digitally enhanced global civil society functions better if States provide their people with safe ways to communicate digitally. In the analogue world, it is easy to identify ourselves even to people we do not know, because States have provided us with passports. We need similar identification for the cybersphere, and yet too few Governments provide the means for safe identification. They should catch up and ensure that their people are protected and able to conduct transactions and communicate safely online.

Our greater dependence on electronic services has brought greater vulnerability in cyberspace, but that does not mean that we can, or should try, to stop digital progress. We should continue our efforts to analyse how international law applies to the use of information and communications technology, particularly with regard to the principle of due diligence, countermeasures, the potential application of the right to self-defence and international humanitarian law. I call on all States that have not yet done so to accede to the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime. I would also like to underline the statement of the Freedom Online Coalition, expressing deep concern about the growing trend in intentional State-sponsored disruptions both of access to information online and its dissemination. No one should be denied the right to peaceful assembly or to freedom of association, opinion or expression, whether in real life or online.

In order to address all of those challenges successfully, we need a strong United Nations. Estonia welcomes the Secretary-General's agenda for United Nations reform and strongly supports efforts to link reform of the United Nations peace and security architecture with reform of its development system. We welcome the emphasis on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, which renders societies resilient to vulnerabilities.

Estonia's chairmanship of the Second Committee is firmly guided by the principles of inclusivity and empathy. It is in our common interests to ensure that the Second Committee tackles the global challenges

that fall under its remit. We count on members' good faith in achieving that.

Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

As a member of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, Estonia has been working closely with a number of countries to improve the working methods of the Security Council, and the functioning of the United Nations as a whole. We need empathy and inclusivity, including in the Security Council. That is why Estonians hope that our first-time candidature for a non-permanent member seat for the period 2020-2021 will be successful. We regained independence 26 years ago, but we already have 22 years of participation in United Nations peacekeeping under our belt. As a small country, we care for all those who are vulnerable in the world. As a digital society, we are a story of hope and of rapid transformation from a poor country recovering from occupation to one that is able to provide for its own citizens and contribute to multilateral cooperation. Again, as a digital State, we consider transparency and being close to people as obligations of a State. We are adamant supporters of rules-based decision-making and clarity of process. We are with those who want to make the United Nations more nimble in order to face the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Estonia for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jimmy Morales, President of the Republic of Guatemala

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Jimmy Morales, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jimmy Morales, President of the Republic of Guatemala, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Morales (*spoke in Spanish*): May my first words be of solidarity with the people and the Government of Mexico, given the tragedy that has beset that beautiful country today. Guatemala has made available a search-and-rescue team. Similarly, we wish to express our most sincere solidarity with all the Caribbean islands that have been affected by storms and hurricanes.

I am grateful to Mr. Peter Thomson for his excellent stewardship as President of the General Assembly during the previoius session, and I wish Mr. Miroslav Lajčák every success as President of the Assembly at its current session. I should also like to take this opportunity to welcome most warmly Secretary-General António Guterres, whom I have already congratulated.

As a sign of of our commitment to peace and development, on 6 July we signed our commitment to the national development agenda, which incorporates the Sustainable Development Goals in our national development plan — K'atún: Our Guatemala 2032 — in order to achieve the goals, targets and indicators set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and thus to affect the well-being of Guatemalans. Similarly, my country has as its priority guaranteeing food security, attaining respect for and promoting human rights, ending poverty, improving the lot of the most vulnerable, stewarding our natural resources and making gender equality a reality.

Guatemala is committed to submitting to its third Universal Periodic Review by the Human Rights Council next November and to a review of its compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

In a historic event for indigenous peoples, we have drawn up, through consensus and inclusive dialogue, an operational guide for the holding of consultations with indigenous peoples, pursuant to Convention No.169 of the International Labour Organization. The guide will help public institutions to comply with their obligations in consultation with indigenous peoples on the type of development they want to achieve.

Again on human rights, I wish to recall that Guatemala, after 36 years of internal armed conflict, signed a peace agreement and took on the even more arduous task of peacebuilding. That conflict was conditioned by international ideological polarization engendered by political doctrines that are alien to us.

Its aftermath weakened State institutions, preventing them from providing necessary services to our people.

We recognized our weakness in proceeding alone and therefore turned to the United Nations. At our initiative, we entered into an agreement with the Organization to establish the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). That experience is unique in the world and has an important mandate that necessitates faithful compliance, not only only as it pertains to us but as a function of the rule of law.

The Commission started its work in 2007. At first, it was to last for two years, a period that has been extended five times, most recently on 4 September. This extension, which I signed in advance, shows our firmest commitment to strengthening and supporting the Commission so that it achieves its goal of transferring its capacities to the State institutions, without setback or challenge. My Administration has significantly increased the budget allocations for the justice sector. The increase is unprecedented in the history of the country so that it may have a strong judicial system.

CICIG has performed much good work, and that is precisely why we support it. The limits of its mandate are the political Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala, the laws of our country and the agreement itself — the establishment and elaboration of CICIG. We — Guatemala and the United Nations Secretariat — are the guarantors of its observance.

It is a principle of our country that nobody should interfere in the administration of justice. Whatever form interference might take — direct or indirect, through the media or any act that, though it might not appear connected, could affect sovereignty — it could affect the working of the country.

Our Government is fully committed to the fight against corruption and impunity. We have therefore begun the process of reviewing the interpretation and the correct implementation of the CICIG agreement, whereby we hope, in an objective and balanced fashion, to perfect, fine tune and correctly implement the task of the Commission, while guaranteeing due process, the presumption of innocence, and avoiding, at all costs, selective persecution, the politicization of justice and a litigation culture in politics. We trust that we will soon begin the relevant actions for both interested parties.

The environment is one of the many issues that we wish to address. On 25 January, Guatemala signed and ratified the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. That is a clear demonstration of my country's level of commitment to meeting its international and national obligations in that regard. I take this opportunity to thank President Emmanuel Macron for his initiative in the global pact for the environment, which we support. Aware of its own high degree of vulnerability and threats of nature, Guatemala already has a national action plan on climate change, so that our domestic legislation may be carried out to achieve mitigation, adaptation and resilience to climate change.

With regard to nutrition and food security, with the support of the World Food Programme we have put together the final report of the strategic review of the situation in Guatemala in that regard, with an emphasis on chronic malnutrition and its root causes. With that tool, we are working hard on our national strategy for the prevention of chronic malnutrition for the period 2016-2020, which is related to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Faced with the threat of transnational organized crime, drug trafficking and terrorism, my Government has made the strengthening of justice and security institutions a priority. With that goal in mind, we have been working hand in hand with our international partners to end crime, corruption and drug trafficking once and for all. In June, the Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America was held in Miami, in which Guatemala was recognized for its strong commitment to the Alliance for Prosperity, its continued support in the fight against drug trafficking and its determined work to advance the shared goals of promoting security in the region.

A major issue for my country, with which we have always dealt seriously, is the interinstitutional and international efforts in the migration phenomenon, with special emphasis on the alliances with El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico and the United States of America. Alongside those actors, we have focused on efforts to boost the economy and improve security conditions in order to reduce migration and decrerase the risk migrants face when embarking on a dangerous journey in search of a better quality of life. That is why we value the efforts of all States Members of the Organization in the process of negotiating the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, which is planned as an updated mechanism within the United Nations

that prioritizes the capacity, work and contribution of migrants, regardless of their immigration status.

Consistent with the need to care for our nationals, we have expanded our consular assistance in the United States in order to promote and protect the human rights of migrants in this country and provide consular assistance closer to them.

I would also like to mention that, in April, Panama and Guatemala signed an information exchange and migration alert agreement, which facilitates the mobility of people from both countries and establishes cooperation links in migration matters. In that context, I want to refer to our so-called young dreamers, who help make up a group of people who bring talent, knowledge and work to the development of the communities where they currently live. Like other countries that count on dreamers protected by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals programme, Guatemala hopes that human sentiment and the regional solidarity of the Government of the United States will prevail so that in the coming months Congress will adopt legislation that allows that group of young people and children to attain permanent legal status and enable them to stay and study in the United States.

My country's role in the multilateral sphere aims to contribute to strengthening the conditions for sustainable peace on the ground. It is precisely in that sphere, where peacekeeping is one of the most noble tasks of the Organization, in which Guatemala is proud to participate. Our commitment is reflected in the deployment of our contingents to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other missions on the African continent where we actively participate, as well as in Haiti, where Guatemalan personnel directly support national efforts with the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, whose mandate is about to end. We are also honoured to continue participating in the United Nations Mission in Colombia. We will continue to contribute constructively to those international efforts with the highest level of professionalism and dedication.

Guatemala, in line with the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative on nuclear weapons, strongly condemns acts of provocation and destabilization that undermine international peace and security and increase tensions not only at the regional level, but also worldwide. Those acts impede peaceful dialogue with a view to contributing to denuclearization. We have repeatedly condemned the nuclear tests carried out by North Korea, as they are a flagrant violation of international law and various resolutions of the Security Council, as well as of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Collective security can be achieved only through the prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons. For that reason, tomorrow Guatemala will sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, thereby taking an important step to reach a world free of nuclear weapons.

My country is concerned about the serious situation facing the Venezuelan people. The political crisis afflicting that beautiful fraternal country is drifting towards the possibility of a rupture of the democratic order, a lack of constitutional guarantees, the violation of human rights and continuous acts of violence, persecution and political repression. We share the serious concern of other countries of the region. That is why we seek to explore ways to contribute to the restoration of democracy in that country through a peaceful and negotiated exit.

Before the Assembly, I want to reaffirm the commitment of my country to resolving permanently and definitively, in the International Court of Justice, our territorial, insular and maritime dispute with Belize, a country with which we aspire to have a privileged relationship and a permanent dialogue about the solution of our common problems.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to send a message of unity to my country. We are experiencing a moment of polarization that is not favourable to that and will not lead us to any safe place. I have welcomed the call for dialogue by some parties, and today, as a democratically elected representative of national unity, I call on all sectors to engage in a serious dialogue on themes that are truly structural, in which we seek solutions to the problems, with all of us participating and helping as a nation. That participation will allow us to speak of deep reforms to the State, which we must solve in the areas of security and justice, and of economic and social development, both rural and urban, as well as the issue of political participation and the functioning of the State. I will return to my country, as always, with hopes of a better future.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guatemala for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jimmy Morales, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ahmadzai: As I stand here before the General Assembly today, I am reminded that the wise men and women of 1945 displayed a unique capacity to learn from and act on the lessons of history. Shaped by the Great Depression and tempered by the carnage of the Second World War, they established global order through institutions that would provide security and stability for generations to come. The United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other organizations were founded to coordinate responses to international challenges and to make crimes against humanity a thing of the past.

There can be little doubt that today the scale, scope and speed of their imagination and efforts have not yet been matched. But future historians will judge those institutions on how they respond to the challenges of today and the challenges we must confront in the future. As global leaders, we seek certainty and familiarity in the rules of the game that dominated the twentieth century. But in today's ever-changing world, the dominant contextual characteristic defining our times is extreme uncertainty. It is easy to illustrate this uncertainty by looking at threats we are facing — to our economies, our security and our values. There is an emerging consensus that advanced economies have yet to arrive at proper growth models to overcome high unemployment, decreasing income and wealth inequality. The threat of economic crisis, therefore, still hangs over us.

Sixteen years after the tragedy of 11 September 2001, the threat of violence by non-State actors has taken the form of a fifth wave of political violence and terrorism. Driven by transnational terrorist networks, criminal organizations, cybercrime and State sponsorship of terror, this fifth wave promises to be a decades-long threat to international security rather than a passing phenomenon. In the twentieth century, the world came together to push back the spread of fascism so that democratic freedoms could be secured. Those very freedoms are under attack today from global terrorism. Terrorism is not only an attack on human life and basic freedoms, but an attack on the compact of citizenship, an attack on the nation-State's relationship with its people, which makes democratic societies unique, fair and free. We must confront the threat of terrorism as a united force and meet it with a long-term solution that matches the long-term agenda of the terrorists themselves.

Lastly, despite the incorporation of tenets of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into the Constitutions of most countries of the world, crimes against humanity still occur with painful regularity. The ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya is especially shocking. Aung San Suu Kyi's lengthy silence was tragic, as our hopes that an icon of human rights would choose principle over power were frustrated. I welcome the chance for Afghanistan to have a seat on the Human Rights Council in order to have a more central role in discussions on these important issues. As a people who are still experiencing crimes against humanity — the latest being killing of civilians in the Mirza Ulang village and attacks on mosques in Kabul and Herat and elsewhere — we are eager to add our voice in support of human rights.

Overcoming the destructive and disruptive patterns of change in the twenty-first century requires collective and coordinated action at the global, local and individual levels. An effective, efficient and respected United Nations is the need of the hour; we must let our twentieth-century institutions be put to the test. I therefore congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I also want to recognize and appreciate the efforts of His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson during the previous session, and I commend His Excellency Secretary-General Guterres for launching his reform of the United Nations.

If the United Nations did not exist today, we would have to invent it to address the demands of our time. Delivering on the promises of the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the context of uncertainty requires re-examination of core functions, re-engineering of business processes, reinvigoration of organizational culture and values, and the reform of systems of accountability. If the United Nations is to be more relevant to countries like mine, it must deliver as one United Nations. But this objective has not yet been fulfilled. The inherited model of the United Nations agencies as instruments of technical assistance and capacity-building should be subjected to the market test, namely, value-for-money and sustainability of results in comparison to Government, private sector and non-governmental modes of delivery. Mutual accountability is a proven mechanism of consolidation and expansion of partnerships and trust-building.

I am honoured to stand before the General Assembly to represent and speak for the people of Afghanistan. We have borne adversity, deprivation and drought with dignity, met invasion with valour and defended our homeland with patriotic fervour. As the front-line State in the global struggle against terrorism and in the front-line of defence of democratic freedoms, our people and security forces are accomplishing heroic deeds on a daily basis. We too — as a nation, a State and a people — are reinventing ourselves to address the challenges and potential offered to us in the twenty-first century.

With President Trump's recent announcement of his strategy to counter terror and stabilize South Asia, Afghanistan's enduring partnership with the United States and the international community has been renewed and redirected. We welcome that strategy, which has now set us on a pathway to certainty. The Afghan people have looked to the United States for this type of resolve for years. We pay tribute to all the men and women of allied nations who have served with us, particularly those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

The strategy consolidates all instruments of American power, conveying a message that the Taliban and their backers cannot win militarily. Only through political settlement can we achieve enduring peace, and I call upon all ranks of Taliban to engage in intra-Afghan dialogue.

We now also have an opportunity for a dialogue with our neighbours on how we can work together earnestly to eliminate terrorism and contain extremism. I call upon Pakistan to engage with us in a comprehensive State-to-State dialogue on peace, security and regional cooperation leading to prosperity.

The Afghan Government has proven that we are committed to peace through our own internal processes, as demonstrated by the peace agreement with Hizb-international Islami. We now call on all of our neighbours, near and far, to join us through the Kabul process in our comprehensive quest for peace and regional stability. However, moving forward, we ask for a change of perspective from our international partners. For too long, the conflict in Afghanistan has been viewed through the prism of civil war; but the war is not within our soil, it is over our soil.

Today there are over 20 international terrorist groups with an imposed presence on Afghan soil. The future of Afghanistan matters because we are on the front lines of the global effort to eradicate the threat of terrorism. Our brave soldiers are fighting and dying for the cause and the sovereignty of the Afghan nation every day. Although we may be on the front lines, the threat knows no boundaries.

For terrorist groups that are harboured in the region, attacks in Kabul, Brussels, Paris, Barcelona, London or anywhere else are equal victories. President Trump" new strategy includes the disruption and denial of sanctuary to terrorists, whose motives know no boundaries. However, a strong and enduring commitment from our international partners alone will not ensure our collective success in Afghanistan. The roots of success are indeed within us, as Afghans.

Today, nearly three years into our decade of transformation, we are turning Afghanistan into a platform for stability. The foundation has been laid. We have articulated and are rigorously implementing road maps for reform: we are prosecuting the corrupt, ending corruption in the security sector, replacing systems of patronage with merit-based systems and making financial processes transparent.

We are also reaching out to those who had previously been excluded from society — young people, the poor and women. Yet those people are our nation's source of resilience. The generation that grew up in the 1990s, which makes up the majority of our population, is now being entrusted with wholesale leadership of the country. A generational change is taking place as youth are empowered at every level. This generation will be

the one that reforms the Government into one that is citizen- and service-oriented.

Through unimaginable hardship, women kept the fabric of our communities and societies together, even as they fell to shreds. Yet women were relegated to the very bottom of society. That was unacceptable, and our nation suffered for it. Today there are more Afghan women in Government, the workforce and active in civil society than ever before in Afghan history, yet we still have far to go. At the helm, we have six women Ambassadors and four women Cabinet members. Simply put, women's empowerment is crucial to our future.

The poor, along with women and young people, are the numerical majorities in Afghanistan that cross ethnic, linguistic, gender and religious lines. About 40 per cent of Afghans still live below the poverty line. Research shows that poverty perpetuates itself because it affects the physiological make-up of a child's brain. We must empower the poor. For too long, they have been the silent majority in our country.

We are recreating the bonds of society in order to change the culture of our State. And we are strengthening our bonds not only internally, but regionally. As we look to our neighbours in South and Central Asia, we are simultaneously strengthening national, global and regional connectivity. Afghanistan will again become a multifaceted hub in the twenty-first century for transport, energy, water and mining and for the benefit of the entire region's economic prosperity and security.

We are already seeing the fruits of our labour. Transmission lines for Central and South Asia, power projects are under construction; the Turkmen railway has reached our border; and the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline for natural gas is under construction. As a central part of our plan for economic advancement, we continue to work with our regional partners to seek avenues of collaboration. We can see now, amid the uncertainties and unique challenges and threats of the twenty-first century, how Afghanistan has become a conundrum for the twentieth-century approaches within which the global order tends to still operate.

While the threat of international terrorism playing out on our soil has dominated the narrative of our country and driven the fate of our people for far too long, we also have enormous potential to be the regional brokers of peace, a hub for economic prosperity and a beacon of democratic values. The birthplace of Rumi still resounds with messages of love, peace and hope. Afghanistan will yet again be the Asian crossroads for dialogue among civilizations and a model of harmony and culture of tolerance and engagement. I am confident that our plans and programmes for self-reliance and reform, bolstered by the commitment of our international partners, will chart out a path for us towards realizing our full potential.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Adama Barrow, President of the Republic of The Gambia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of The Gambia.

Mr. Adama Barrow, President of the Republic of The Gambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Adama Barrow, President of the Republic of the Gambia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Barrow: With warm greetings to all members of the General Assembly from the new Gambia, we thank the Almighty God for making this great gathering of global leaders possible once again this year. Allow me to formally congratulate the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General of the Organization on their leadership and commitment to the values of the United Nations.

After more than 70 years of existence, the United Nations undoubtedly remains the ultimate international platform for finding solutions to global challenges, as we in the Gambia know all too well. Today, on my maiden appearance at this great forum of world leaders, let me take this opportunity to reaffirm The Gambia's firm commitment to the Charter of the United Nations. My Government fully appreciates the United Nations central role in the pursuit of preventive diplomacy to avert crises around the world.

The recent political crisis that took place in my country created a new democratic beginning, and the experience taught us useful lessons that Gambians will not easily forget. We learned that willpower, national unity, decisive regional intervention and the undivided and clear support of the international community could produce positive outcomes. Also of importance was the coordinated international action inspired by our common values of solidarity, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, which were critical in sending the right message to the former President to respect the will of the people and leave without bloodshed.

During those difficult times, we knew we had friends — ones who came to our aid and who have since kept faith with us. We therefore would like to seize this great opportunity to thank the leaders of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for their timely and firm intervention in bringing peace to The Gambia. We also thank all our regional and international friends who stood by us in our critical hour of need. Thanks to their collective efforts, The Gambia is now on a solid path to peace and good governance, and ready to resume playing our traditional role among the champions of human rights and democracy. Gambians have made an irreversible choice to close a dark chapter in our history, and today our national agenda is one of reform and transformation.

Like any other restored democracy, we are facing enormous challenges in the revival of our economy and a comprehensive reform of our laws and our administrative and judicial institutions. The modernization of our security sector and the consolidation of the rule of law and human rights are part of our reform programme. It is only by overcoming these challenges that we can reinforce our democratic gains, and my Government is committed to delivering a new Gambia that is fit for our children to be proud of. Indeed, young people were all along at the forefront of our democratic transition, and addressing youth unemployment is a top priority for my Government and will no doubt create enormous opportunities.

We also recognize the crucial role of Gambians in the diaspora in contributing to the transformation of our motherland. Let me seize this opportunity to sincerely thank our development partners and friends for the invaluable budget and policy support they are providing to the Government to help address the challenges of job creation and youth irregular migration. My Government is committed to using such resources wisely for sustainable socioeconomic development.

We may be a small country but we have huge needs. As a matter of urgent priority, we have developed a national development plan in line with the transformative agenda of the new Gambia. This development blueprint is designed to put the country back on track to economic growth and prosperity following two decades of mismanagement, corruption and widespread human rights violations. This new plan is built on sound macroeconomic and fiscal policies that will lead to economic stability and growth over the medium and long terms. It has also incorporated the Sustainable Development Goals and other commitments contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

The Paris Agreement is critically relevant to The Gambia because climate change means a lot more in our situation. When land productivity declines and water shortage intensifies, young people from rural areas are often sent away to ease the burden on their families and to find new sources of income. This sadly explains why many young Gambians have been forced to make the long and dangerous journey to Europe. The journey is so risky that many perish on the high seas and never reach their final destination. Countless others disappear into immigration detention centres or vanish in the sands of the Sahara desert. Those who are able to complete the journey are often dismissed as economic migrants and sent back home. This sense of hopelessness and frustration also provides fertile ground for smugglers and extremist groups to recruit innocent young people into the criminal underworld.

Young people do not deserve this experience; they deserve the chance to enjoy a safe and prosperous future at home. Creating new employment opportunities that provide young people with sustainable incomes and connect them to a revitalized land and a healthy and productive environment is an investment in the future of the nation. This is a key priority of our national development plan.

Over the past decade, we have lost many of our friends and development partners through the wrong policy choices, but since the restoration of democracy and good governance many of our long-standing partners are coming back to work with us. We are in the process of rejoining the Commonwealth and the International Criminal Court. We are also committed to

being part of the African Peer Review Mechanism. We are finalizing plans for a roundtable donors' conference to mobilize resources for the long-term development of the country. The continued support, solidarity and partnership of the international community will be critical to the success of that conference.

Although The Gambia did not go through armed conflict, the political crisis that we experienced arose as a result of decades of bad governance, weak State institutions, the rule of fear and growing intolerance. We were on the brink of physical violence and armed conflict. We therefore express our deep appreciation to the United Nations Office for West Africa, the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office for the critical initial support they have rendered to my country.

The pursuit of peace and security in Africa and the world will always be a major foreign policy goal for The Gambia. We will pursue good-neighbourliness and cooperation with our sister Republic of Senegal, and the countries of ECOWAS will remain our strategic partners.

West Africa is on the march towards the consolidation of its democratic gains, but as a region we are facing serious threats to our peace and security. Terrorism, extremism, religious intolerance, organized crime and drug trafficking are seriously undermining our development efforts. Recent attacks in Mali, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and the Sahel in general underscore the urgent need for greater regional and international cooperation in addressing those challenges. The indifference, injustices and indignities in isolated parts of the world create real threats to global peace, prosperity and democracy. We need to take bigger and bolder steps to close the gap between the North and South, as the world is too imbalanced.

We remain deeply concerned that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict still defies resolution. My Government firmly subscribes to the idea of a two-State solution for the two peoples to live side by side in peace and harmony. We therefore call on the Secretary-General to vigorously pursue that formula in the interest of lasting peace.

Continued support in the areas of transitional justice and security sector reform will certainly go a long way towards entrenching peace, justice and democracy in The Gambia.

There is a shortage neither of ideas nor of resources to fix the major problems facing the human race. What has always been scarce is political will, and unless adequate resources are invested the pace of development will remain slow and a minimal impact will be achieved. It is against that backdrop that I am calling on the private sector to emulate philanthropists in their generosity towards the most isolated, marginalized and deprived sections of the world. Providing safe drinking water, roads, power, health care and education is key to restoring human dignity.

In our foreign policy, as part of our historic friendship we fully recognize the One China policy. The People's Republic of China is the sole representative of the Chinese people and a true friend of The Gambia. Our two countries continue to strengthen cooperation on the basis of a win-win approach, built on mutual trust and respect within the framework of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation.

An organization like the United Nations, by virtue of its functions, will always require some level of reform of its management systems. The intergovernmental character of the mandates entrusted to the Secretariat requires the existence of trust and accountability between Member States and the Secretariat. As the United Nations embarks on its proposed reforms, we stand ready to give it full support in the interest of an effective and more relevant world body.

Last but not least, one long-standing issue is the pending question of Security Council reform. Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan once said that no reform of the United Nations can be complete without reform of the Security Council. That remains true today. Africa will not give up its legitimate and historic quest for true representation on the Council, and The Gambia fully supports the African Union's demand for the long-overdue reform of the Security Council.

I want to conclude by reaffirming my optimism and confidence in our collective ability to uplift humankind from the clutches of poverty; to institute a global order of peace, firmly held together by justice; and to love, care and tolerate each other. In tune with our national anthem, we pledge our firm allegiance to those values that we hold ever true. I offer the best wishes from the people of The Gambia — the smiling coast of Africa.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of The Gambia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Adama Barrow, President of the Republic of The Gambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Morales Ayma (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the people of Bolivia, I wish to express our full solidarity with the people of Mexico. Alarmed by this afternoon's earthquake, we extend our support and brotherhood to Mexico as it addresses the resulting problems.

Once again, as leaders of the world we have gathered here in the historic Hall of the General Assembly. We meet yet again to voice our positions on the major challenges facing our family — the human family. The United Nations, as set forth in its Charter, was established to save succeeding generations from war, promote social progress and improve the standard of living of all peoples. Unfortunately, many of those promises have come to nothing, and after more than 70 years we see that in many instances, instead of making progress towards those objectives, we have regressed.

As we have affirmed many times, due to the abusive practices of imperialism, the market of savage consumption that supports capitalism and endless colonialist adventures, the world is enduring a multiplicity of crises that, instead of being resolved, are growing worse. War and violent conflict remain the scourge of millions of people. External aggressions in Iraq have led to more than a million deaths to date. In Syria, almost half a million people have lost their lives. In Libya, tens of thousands have been killed. In Yemen, the humanitarian crisis is of great proportions.

History has shown that, in order to appropriate natural resources and control the world geopolitically, military bases are deployed, invasions are organized, and Governments are brought down to create chaos and take advantage of the situation. Many of these invasions have fuelled the emergence of terrorist groups and unleashed violent confrontations and attacks on civilian populations, causing even more harm to innocent victims. Bolivia condemns terrorism and calls for fighting it and for resolving the structural causes of its emergence.

To this terrible situation is added the climatic crisis. We note that this year has again been the hottest in the history of the planet. Hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, droughts, pollution of the air and oceans and the consequent extinction of species are results of the capitalist model, consumption levels and excessive industrialization. In this situation, the countries of the South, which pollute the least, are the ones that suffer the most. It is imperative that all our countries join the Paris Agreement on Climate Change to work together to address the enormous challenges involved in saving the planet.

It is unjustifiable and inadmissible that the United States has decided to turn its back on the Paris Agreement. As one of the world's main polluters, its Government, by refusing to do its part in the global effort, has become a threat to Mother Earth. What is necessary is unequivocal political will. We cannot expect market forces to finally convince the leaders of the capitalist world to take action. We extend our embrace of solidarity to our brothers and sisters in the Caribbean who are suffering the consequences of the passage of hurricanes. Together, as a united family, we will share with them what we have, even if it is not enough.

Our rivers, our seas, our forests and science have given us irrefutable evidence and call upon us to act. Water is the blood of Mother Earth that gives life to rivers, lakes, seas and oceans, which in turn are a source of life and generate balance. They are universal commons that cover three-quarters of our home. They bathe everything on all continents and islands of the Earth. They do this naturally, with no regard for political borders or nationalities. They should be respected, cared for, shared and preserved for future generations.

Bolivia has promoted the recognition that water is a human right. It is essential for the survival of humankind. Accordingly, our Constitution also prohibits it from being the used for profit or commercialism. The use of

water must lead the way to opportunities that promote collaboration, interaction and harmony among peoples, not to cause conflicts over its origin, ownership or use. It is in this spirit of safeguarding human rights and sovereign rights related to our natural resources and in pursuit of good-neighbourly agreements that Bolivia hopes to resolve its Silala water dispute, which has been brought to the International Court of Justice. Water should not be the cause of internal or international conflicts. It must bring together and unite all States, nations, communities, peoples, social movements and individuals. For Bolivia, which is the hydrographic heart of South America, this concept is very important. Where water flows, peace must flow.

Not only is the world growing warmer every year, but each succeeding year is growing more unfair and more unequal. The gap between those who have the most — everything — and those who have almost nothing is widening every day. According to the most recent report from Oxfam, eight people have the same amount of wealth as 3.6 billion people, that is, half of the population of the planet.

Inequality is immoral. If 800 million people suffer from hunger, it is not because there is a lack of food. If millions of children die from infection, it is not because there is a lack of medicine. If 1.1 billion people do not have electricity, it is not because of a lack of energy in the world. If there is illiteracy, it is not because there are no books. If there are poor people in the world, it is not because there are no resources.

Due to war, terrorism and other conflicts, we are experiencing the worst humanitarian crisis since the founding of the United Nations. More than 128 million people in 33 countries require humanitarian assistance. More than 65 million people have been forcibly displaced. More than 22 million are refugees, which is the highest number ever recorded in the human history. More than 10 million people are stateless.

This calls for our attention. Bolivia condemns the construction of walls and laws that seek to criminalize migration. Accordingly, we propose the creation of a universal citizenship. The social and immigration crisis has its origin in the dominant world order, with its limitless greed for profit and appropriation of the commons, produces violence, promotes inequalities and destroys Mother Earth. Migrants cannot be held responsible for the economic and financial crises or for insecurity. We must not allow them to be viewed as criminals either. No migrant is illegal.

Some Governments, far from helping to resolve the structural causes of this phenomenon, such as war, the consequences of climate change or the economic asymmetries among the States, proclaim greater restrictions in their migration policies, massive expulsions and the building of walls. Walls counter the history of humankind. Walls cripple science and knowledge. Walls confine our souls, fuel hatred of difference and stifle freedom.

In Tiquipaya, Bolivia, representatives of social movements from 45 countries around the world came together at the World Peoples' Conference in June for a world without walls towards universal citizenship. At that conference, we drafted alternative proposals with a humanist vision to welcome, protect, promote and integrate migrants. In August, Pope Francis dedicated a pastoral document to those four verbs.

We too call on the Governments of the world to come together to tackle criminal networks that traffic in human beings by declaring the trade and traffick in human beings as a crime against humanity and by considering the formation of a world ombudsman as an authority of universal jurisdiction responsible for ensuring human rights. Once again, I call for a global pact to act as the bridge to move towards the universal citizenship that we desire, because there are no categories and there are no differences between nationals and foreigners. We are all human beings and children of Mother Earth.

The United States of America must unilaterally and unconditionally put an end to the unjust embargo that has caused so much suffering to the Cuban people for nearly 60 years. It is an unjust and failed policy, and must be abandoned. The recent actions announced by President Trump spell a resurgence in the financial and trade embargo against Cuba and reverse the progress made between the two nations. The United States must not only lift that criminal embargo, but also make economic reparations for the damage caused and return Guantánamo to Cuban sovereignty. I pay deepest tribute to the memories of Commander Fidel and Commander Che Guevara, who from this very rostrum warned us not to trust imperialism.

We welcome the peace process in Colombia, including the consolidation of the ceasefire, disarmament and the integration of the Fuerzas

Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia into political life. Revolutions take place through the ballot box and social consensus, not through bullets. Latin America and the Caribbean are coming together as a region of peace.

Bolivia unequivocally condemns the unilateral sanctions and the threats of invasion levelled by the Government of the United States against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Our region is nobody's back yard. We also reject the conduct of the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, Luis Almagro, who is the spokesperson for anti-Latin American interests. We express our support for and solidarity with President Nicolás Maduro and the Venezuelan people. We welcome and support the ongoing democratic dialogue.

For Bolivia, the Palestinian cause is indisputable. We condemn the criminal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. We condemn the construction of new settlements, and we condemn military aggression against the Palestinian people. We demand the achievement of a two-State solution and the establishment of a Palestinian State withing the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

We condemn the unilateral and illegal military actions of the United States in deploying its forces in the Syrian Arab Republic. We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General, Russia, Iran, Turkey and Kazakhstan in seeking a ceasefire and in contributing to the peace negotiations process. We believe that if it were not for interventionism, we would not be suffering that war.

Bolivia condemns the production, development and use of all nuclear and chemical weapons, which pose a serious threat to peace, security and human life itself. We demand that all military interventions be avoided in resolving the situation in the Korean peninsula, and that negotiations be resumed as soon as possible to resolve that conflict peacefully. It is clear that the main threat to mother Earth, multilateralism, peace and freedom is the Government of the United States of America.

It is my duty to describe the economic and social situation of my country. Bolivia has consolidated an economic model that has successfully coped with the global crisis of the capitalist system. Bolivia leads economic growth in our region. We have recovered our homeland. Bolivia is a land that is free of illiteracy, free of North American military bases, free of the Drug Enforcement Administration and free of the United States Agency for International Development. It is a land free of impositions by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Over the past decade, we have reduced extreme poverty from 38.2 per cent to 16.8 per cent, and we will eradicate it by 2025. We have reduced inequality. In 2005, the wealthiest 10 per cent held 128 times more wealth than the poorest 10 per cent; now, the wealthiest 10 per cent hold 46 times more wealth than the poorest 10 per cent. Bolivia ranks second in the world among the countries with the most women in Parliament. We are committed to multilateralism, the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the peaceful and negotiated resolution of conflicts.

In 2003, Bolivia came before the International Court of Justice in The Hague, seeking a peaceful solution to its unresolved 100-year-old dispute with the Republic of Chile that would allow us to exercise our right to sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean. We seek a solution that will satisfy both the historical and legislative background and the future understanding between neighbourly and fraternal peoples through an opportune and effective negotiation in good faith.

We trust in the Court's decision and in a process of dialogue and negotiation that, unlike the invasions that we have suffered in the past, will help us to overcome our differences and promote our complementarity, free and sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean and the proper use of our shared natural resources. We are grateful for the solidarity shown by many States, peoples and leaders who have expressed their support for our maritime cause. I take this opportunity to ask all participants in the Assembly to accompany us in our peaceful quest for justice. It is anunwavering challenge for the brotherhood of our people over the coming generations.

With every passing year, our challenges become greater. War continues to destroy cities and global warming is a growing threat. If we truly want to resolve those issues and defend the interests of our peoples, it is essential to recognize basic services as human rights, respect the rights of Mother Earth and take up the fight against capitalism, colonialism and imperialism. Only if we win that fight will there be an authentic global order, based on solidarity, equality and social justice and respect for the right of peoples to peace and development so that they can live comfortably.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, President of the Republic of Honduras

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Honduras.

Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, President of the Republic of Honduras, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Hernández Alvarado (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the people of Honduras, I would like to extend greetings to the General Assembly.

The Honduran people extend solidarity to their Mexican brothers and sisters in the wake of the recent tragedy. I reiterate our commitment to continuing to provide supplies and support.

Three years ago, I addressed the General Assembly for the first time (see A/69/PV.7). Three years later, I would like to reflect on how Honduras has met the challenges it has encountered. Today, I would like to share with the Assembly and with the world how we are building a new Honduras.

Four years ago, transnational organized crime in Honduras led to high levels of violence seen in very few countries around the world. At the end of 2013, there were 75 murders per 100,000 inhabitants, and two years prior to 2013, the figure stood at almost 90 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. From 2013 to date, however, the murder rate of 75 per 100,000 inhabitants has fallen by almost 30 percentage points.

The most recent *Global Peace Index* issued by the Institute for Economics and Peace indicates that our management of the situation has placed Honduras 17 places higher in the global peace ranking. We have also managed to lower our fiscal deficit to 3 per cent from 8 per cent of gross domestic product. We have improved the Honduran economy and growth this year stands at 4.1 per cent. Our exports have increased, investments are on the rise and our national reserves are enough to purchase almost six months worth of imports. The country's national currency has been revalued and inflation is very moderate. Risk-rating agencies have raised Honduras' credit rating. Our rating is now the best we have ever had.

This year, we, along with neighbour Guatemala, started the first customs union of the Americas. Honduras and Guatemala now have a zone with free movement of goods, services and people. In addition, we are negotiating with our brothers of El Salvador and Nicaragua to join the customs union and, in the future, we hope that Costa Rica and Panama will also become members. In that way, we will become the seventh largest market in Latin America.

El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras have also launched a plan to develop the Gulf of Fonseca, which has the support of the Central American Bank for Economic Integration. That will enable us to create a genuine hub for economic, tourism and social development in the Pacific region. It will be the region's first special economic zone. This region, formerly rife with conflict among the three nations, will become a development hub for the good of our three countries.

I would also like to share with the Assembly the fact that Honduras is poised to make extraordinary headway in attracting investment. I am referring to the establishment of employment and economic development zones, in which both national and international investment will have institutional guarantees in four key areas — the legal, economic, administrative and political spheres — based on good practices that are familiar to companies and workers in prosperous countries. My country and people's very productive labour force will then have the best opportunities in the world, under the Honduran flag. Based on the economic development plan, Honduras 2020, we will be creating at least 600,000 new jobs for Hondurans over the next five years.

Over the past four years, we have invested approximately $2 billion in infrastructure to make Honduras a major logistics hub in Central America. We have built airports, ports in the Atlantic and the

Pacific, highways, an interoceanic highway and a next-generation customs model. All of this will allow the Central American region to have an outstanding logistics system.

We are also making strides in the areas of transparency and counter-corruption. We are the only country in the world that has signed an agreement with Transparency International to work with that organization in five civil service sectors. We have made considerable progress in applying international standards when acquiring and setting up infrastructure, through the Construction Sector Transparency initiative.

We are cleaning up our national police. We are creating a new police institution. We are strengthening our public ministry. We are created anti-corruption courts. We entered into an agreement with the Organization of American States to establish what we call the Mission of Support against Corruption and Impunity. In addition we have reorganized system through which the national health system purchases medicines.

In line with our commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 1, our Administration has implemented the most ambitious social programme to protect our most vulnerable citizens. We have named this programme Better Life. It helps us to bring dignity to our compatriots suffering from extreme poverty. There are already nearly 2.5 million participants involved in at least one of the components of Better Life.

I would also like to state that Honduras fully supports the reform of the United Nations system promoted by the Secretary-General in order to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Our countries face major challenges due to climate change, the emergence of the nuclear threat, poverty, organized international crime, terrorism, racism, intolerance and human rights violations. These are challenges that we must analyse and face together with determination and absolute commitment. Climate change has been relentless, bringing a tragic series of hurricanes and tropical storms. I wish to express our solidarity and condolences to our brothers affected by the destructive force of these recent natural phenomena, and we encourage the Assembly to assist the countries, predominantly in the Caribbean, that have suffered so much devastated. Honduras will be present, as we have already offered, for our brothers.

Nuclear weapons also pose a serious threat to humankind, and worse still is the threat of using them. Honduras rejects the recent nuclear-weapons tests. We support the resolutions adopted by the Security Council, as well as the channels conducive to the diplomatic management of tensions and threats to world peace.

Poverty is high on the agendas of Governments in developing countries. We have a duty to overcome the structural conditions that exclude large sectors of our societies from access to goods and services that would otherwise allow for a dignified life and opportunities for the comprehensive development of peoples, families, our communities and our countries.

Poverty has effects on the environment. It fosters internal and international migration and has serious social consequences stemming from the breakdown of the family breakdown and the separation it engenders, generating insecurity and violence. It causes much suffering. We must combat poverty with social safety nets, access to basic health and education services, inclusive and sound credit and technical assistance to avoid depriving people of the goods that are essential to life.

However, as developing countries we face the problem of the criterion that developed countries have adopted to allocate cooperation resources. What do I mean? Just think. The criterion used is that of classification by means of the national income of countries at three levels: high, medium and low. The premise is that most help will go to low-income countries, and that middle- and high-income countries have a greater internal capacity to overcome poverty. Because of that, the countries that are most harmed when it comes to access to international aid are those classified in the middle-income category, as is the case for Honduras.

Our country is committed to the defence and promotion of human rights. For Honduras, respect for the human person constitutes a State policy. We recently established a secretariat for human rights. We have institutionalized a mechanism for dialogue between the Government and human rights organizations, and we also manage the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras, which is already open and functioning.

It is very painful for any person to be forced to leave their family, customs and the land of their birth. The migrants of our era are our new martyrs. They

are the new heroes who fight abroad, fight adversity, work tirelessly, carry out the most difficult work under the most difficult conditions and yet still press on. They are still able to contribute to their countries of destination with their talent, culture, dedication, efforts and by paying taxes. Our Honduran compatriots, who migrated when they faced difficult circumstances in our country, make us proud of their endeavours, and we therefore demand that they be treated in a way that is dignified and commensurate with their contribution to the countries to which they have gone to build a new life.

Honduras is endeavouring to improve the conditions of our citizens so that they do not have to leave, to abandon their homeland and families in search of opportunities in other countries. However, we are also working with our brother countries in Latin America to ensure that there is recognition of the contribution of those who, due to natural phenomena, have been granted temporary protection status, and for children who had to leave with their parents, grew up far from their homeland and began to dream in another.

May those dreams continue. May dreamers imagine a new world and be fuelled by hope, turning their yearnings into reality. We have worked for that new world the last four years. That new world is the reason we are here today. We are confident that our actions will allow us to see the rising of a new sun, of a new day. Nothing and no one can forbid us to dream. Let us continue to dream. Together, we can build a better world for our children and for the children of our children.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Honduras for the statement he hasjust made.

Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sebastian Kurz, Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria.

Mr. Kurz (Austria): The world has never felt more insecure, at least not in my lifetime. Three years ago, when I first spoke from this rostrum (see A/69/PV.15), I was concerned about three serious challenges. First, violent conflict had returned to Europe with the crisis in and around Ukraine. Secondly, with the success of Da'esh in Iraq and Syria, radicalization and extremism sharply increased within our societies. Thirdly, the potential humanitarian consequences of a nuclear explosion became a growing concern.

Today we still face a violent conflict in and around Ukraine. Acts of extremism and terrorism continue, and the crisis in North Korea demonstrates that the risk of a nuclear confrontation is higher than the world has seen in a long time.

While we have achieved a lot over the past years, there are still too many conflicts around the world — conflicts that result in terrible human suffering, such as in Syria, South Sudan, Ukraine, Yemen or Libya. There are also new sources of instability, such as in Venezuela or in Myanmar. On a global level, poverty, hunger and climate change, as well as organized crime and the proliferation of weapons remain key concerns. What really worries me is that we seem to have lost trust in the ability of States and institutions to solve these challenges.

As current Chair-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), I can see this on a regular basis. This is a dangerous development because there is no alternative to international cooperation. We need only took at terrorism. Terrorist organizations, such as Da'esh, work on a global scale. More than 25,000 persons die each year in terrorist attacks all over the world and almost all of them are the result of extreme radicalization. This is why, as OSCE Chair, the fight against radicalization is a priority for us. We are working on concrete recommendations for OSCE States on how to better prevent and stop radical groups from misleading our citizens.

What we need to do is to destroy these radical groups militarily where they operate, such as in Syria and Iraq, but we also have to be clear that after our military success, more foreign terrorist fighters will return to our societies. That is why, at the same time, we also have to continue the fight within our own societies. We have to take more action to stop radicals with police measures and prevent our youth from being misled by these terrorists.

The migration crisis is another global problem and source of instability. Over 60 million people are on the move worldwide. No country can manage this

crisis on its own. If we look at demographics, we know that we have to act now. In the next 30 years, the world population will grow from 7.5 to about 10 billion people. Africa's population alone will double from 1.2 to 2.5 billion people.

Recent years have shown how difficult such a massive migration movement can become. Over 1 million people have come to Europe via smugglers and thousands died in the Mediterranean Sea. We need to stop this. Uncontrolled migration leads to chaos. Therefore, we need to manage orderly migration and support people as much as possible in their countries of origin. In order to achieve this, we should address three key issues.

First, countries need to effectively control their borders. Without such control, no Government can establish security and maintain public support for legal immigration. Citizens need to have confidence that their Governments — not the smugglers — decide who should cross the border. Secondly, the business model of traffickers of human beings must be destroyed. Securing the borders is the most important first step. Smugglers cannot sell their tickets to Europe when there is no way to come through. People that are saved shall be brought back to their countries of origin or to internationally monitored migration centres in their region. Thirdly, we need effective support for countries of origin to establish a local perspective for the young generation there. This is why, over the past four years, Austria has doubled its bilateral development assistance and quadrupled its emergency fund. I am pleased that the United Nations is developing a global compact on migration, as well as a compact on refugees. They should ensure a more coordinated international approach to deal with these challenges.

Cooperation is also key when we address crises and conflicts around the globe. The crisis in and around Ukraine has lasted for far too long. More than 10,000 people have died and 3.8 million people are in need of humanitarian aid. Despite the Minsk agreements, heavy weapons continue to move into the region and mines are being laid; despite negotiations with the Normandy group, the political process is stalled; and despite regular meetings of the Trilateral Contact Group, there is no progress on the ground. The worst thing is that civilians suffer the most. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission is key to stabilizing the situation, but its unarmed monitors are increasingly threatened and, for the first time, the Mission lost one of its members.

Yet, despite this tragic incident, it is important to maintain the Mission. From my visit to the conflict zone, I know that without the OSCE Monitoring Mission, the situation would become even worse. Therefore, in March this year, the OSCE strengthened the Mission by increasing the number of monitors up to 1,000 and by providing better technical equipment. I also welcome the discussions in the Security Council to increase the security situation of the OSCE monitors, possibly with a United Nations peacekeeping operation. More safety for monitors means more monitors on the ground, and more monitors on the ground means more security for the local population. We are also working hard to find political solutions that extend beyond ceasefires. The goal remains clear — a free and stable Ukraine with good relations with both its western and eastern neighbours.

Allow me to turn to another security threat that we must deal with. The risk of nuclear confrontation today is bigger than it has been in a long time. The consequences of a nuclear explosion are extremely grave, nuclear disarmament remains the number-one unfinished business worldwide, and the recent escalation of tensions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a clear warning signal.

Austria has been consistently engaged in efforts to reduce the risk of a nuclear disaster and to work for a world without nuclear weapons. This is a hard and long road, and we are not naive about that, but it is a goal that is worth fighting for. In that regard, we welcomed the Vienna agreement that placed Iran's nuclear activities under international monitoring. Undermining that agreement now would weaken efforts to achieve negotiated solutions for nuclear disputes.

The new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is an important achievement in this connection. It is a crucial, positive step to get rid of all nuclear weapons. Today we often hear that nuclear weapons are necessary for security. This narrative is not only wrong, it is also dangerous. The new Treaty provides a real alternative: a world without nuclear weapons, where everyone is safer. The overwhelming support of the international community in adopting the Treaty demonstrates that many countries share that goal. I hope that we will be successful with our initiative.

At a time when universal values are under threat, we need to be strong in standing up for human rights, the rule of law and good governance. Protecting civilians and human rights has always been a priority of Austria's foreign policy. That is why we hope to be elected to the Human Rights Council for the period 2019-2021, and I would like to ask the Assembly for its support. I can assure members that Austria will continue to work for effective international cooperation, and we will continue to actively support the United Nations and its new Secretary-General.

The Acting President: I now call on his Excellency Mr. Isselkou Ould Ahmed Izid Bih, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Mr. Bih (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to read out the statement of His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ould Abdel Azia, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, on the occasion of the convening of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

> "First, I would like to express our sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák and to his friendly country, Slovakia, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I would also like to express my deep appreciation for Mr. Peter Thompson and his valuable efforts during his presidency of the seventy-first session. I would also like to greatly commend the tireless and noble efforts of His Excellency the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, in leading our Organization and in the service of international peace and security.
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> "The theme of our session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", is a appropriate choice in a world witnessing great challenges. In that regard, Mauritania plays a pivotal role in the maintenance of international peace and security in the Sahel and the Sahara regions through a comprehensive approach based on openness, dialogue, professionalism and firmness. Our efforts have been crowned with success against terrorist groups after fierce battles in 2010 and 2011.
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> "In spite of an extremely complex regional situation, experts have noted that Mauritania has succeeded in dealing with terrorism and extremism. We have developed our security and defence capabilities in record time, with due attention to individual and collective rights and with extreme care for the least fortunate of society. That has been achieved by adopting a policy of sustainable development. Reporters Without Borders noted improvement over three successive years of continuous progress at the Arab and regional levels. We have also established a policy of dialogue, while ensuring the freedoms of expression, demonstration and organization, as well as human rights, after the so-called Arab Spring that swept over certain Arab countries.
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> "We have succeeded in establishing a political dialogue with the majority and the opposition since 2011 and introduced substantive legislative and organizational reforms, thereby empowering Mauritanian women and establishing the value of citizenship and goodwill for all. We have also promoted good governance and comprehensive dialogue with the opposition, civil society and independent persons, and since September and October 2016 we have succeeded in further establishing our democracy, the rule of law and the organization of public resources.
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> "Our region faces grave dangers in terms of climate change, terrorism, organized crime, drugs, illegal weapons and illegal migration. Mauritania has improved its legal framework in accordance with international rights and standards, established 14 agreements and protocols relating to terrorism, and created an open dialogue with Salafists and religious extremists in order to rehabilitate and reintegrate them into society.
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> "Our efforts have helped us achieve a high standing in the ranking by Australia's Institute for Economics and Peace, and we have succeeded in fighting drug-trafficking, being, on a list of 12 States prepared by the United States State Department, the only one that has succeeded in dealing with the issue. We have also succeeded in dealing with illegal migration. According to the statistics of the International Organization on Migration, we reduced the number of illegal migrants from 36,000 in 2006 to zero in 2014. We have hosted more than 60,000 refugees so far and have been commended for our efforts in that regard.
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> "Mauritania has played a leading role in the establishment of the Group of Five for the Sahel,

which also includes Mali, the Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad. We host the secretariat of this regional organization, where together we coordinate our actions in the areas of security and development. The organization has set out many joint programmes and projects that have gained great interest from our international partners. The five members of the Group have also established a Joint Force and have coordinated their military and security operations with the headquarters located in Mali.

"The issue of human rights holds great importance in our national policy. Since 2012, slavery has been criminalized, and our legal codes have been strengthened to deal with the vestiges of slavery throughout the country. We have also set out a road map that includes 29 recommendations on fighting terrorism. In accordance with the relevant documents of the United Nations, we established a social security agency that deals with the issue and assists all those who have suffered from it across the country.

"We have also resolved the issues that Mauritanian refugees face regarding repatriation and marginalization, making it possible for them to have a decent life and reintegrate into society, as well as providing them with them employment opportunities and enjoyment of their rights.

"The large majority of the countries participating in the Universal Periodic Review of human rights have commended Mauritania and its policies. Mauritanian women have acquired great importance in the country and have been the subject of several initiatives to enable them to be present in all sectors and compete freely in fields that were previously monopolized by men, as well as participate adequately in political and social life. We have worked to enable Mauritanian women to join regional and international organizations by proposing their candidatures, and we have had considerable success in becoming a member of certain important United Nations committees.

"With a view to establishing justice and equality for all people, we have introduced major reforms in our legal codes to guarantee the independence of the judiciary, to fight corruption and bribery and to promote transparency. This has allowed Mauritania to rank high among 26 African countries in this field, according to a study prepared by the International Monetary Fund.

"In view of our important strategic position, we have striven to follow an economic investment policy that guarantees the rights of the investor, with a view to attracting foreign investment. We were awarded 16 points in *Doing Business*, prepared by the World Bank for 2016-2017, and are among the five countries in the world experiencing the highest rate of improvement.

"Crowning the credibility of the country at the regional and continental level has been our chairing of the African Union (AU), following our chairing the AU Peace and Security Council. During our mandates we have striven to participate in reaching peaceful solutions to the crises in Côte d'Ivoire, Libya, Mali and Burundi. We have also participated positively in solving the crisis in The Gambia, and we strive continuously to assist other countries in overcoming their crises. We presided over the League of Arab States in 2016, organizing the summit meeting in Nouakchott for the first time.

"With regard to the Palestinian cause, Mauritania calls upon the Assembly to work for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative, the Madrid principles and other relevant international resolutions.

"We also call for the settlement of the crisis in Yemen by supporting the legitimacy represented by President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, and we welcome every effort by the United Nations in that crisis. With regard to Libya, we call upon all parties concerned to redouble their efforts to stand up to armed groups and restore stability and security to that country. We also urge all parties concerned to make every effort to reach a settlement to the Syrian crisis.

"Climate change is a great challenge facing us all in terms of sustainable development, particularly in the Sahel and Sahara area. We have experienced the phenomenon of the migration of sand dunes, which has destroyed huge agricultural areas and grazing lands. We have prepared appropriate policies to deal with that problem and have invested in the use of renewable sources of energy. We have been commended, for our efforts in that regard, as

one of the few African countries using renewable energy sources,

"Mauritania hosts the headquarters of the Great Green Wall, an ambitious project over 7,000 kilometres long and 15 kilometres wide, connecting the Atlantic coast of West Africa to the Red Sea in the East, benefiting 11 countries of the region. We also welcomed the historic 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change and hope that all parties will uphold their commitments.

"The reform of the United Nations and the adaptation of its bodies to deal with new challenges — particularly the Security Council, which is responsible for international peace and security — have become an urgent necessity. We support every effort in that regard.

"There is no doubt that the establishment of justice and the spreading of a culture of peace and tolerance among people and the renouncing of terrorism, extremism and violence would encourage and help establish peace and security and realize sustainable development in the world.

"The Islamic Republic of Mauritania calls upon all Member States to work together for a world that enjoys multilateralism and respects the principles of the United Nations with a view to establishing peace, stability and security in which people live peacefully together."

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to the speaker in exercise of the right of reply, may I remind delegations that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Maleki (Islamic Republic of Iran): As usual, the representative of the Israeli regime today made unfounded allegations against Iran (see A/72/PV.4). He tried to deceive the whole world by distracting public opinion from the horrific policies and practices of his own regime. However, the nature of that regime, which is founded on aggression, occupation, suppression, violence and terror, can in no way be covered up by accusing others.

That is another type of weapon of mass destruction in the hands of that regime: a weapon of mass deception. Nevertheless, he ignored the fact that in the information age that weapon is becoming more useless by the day. Instead of lying, accusing others and attempting to deceive public opinion, he should have explained to the General Assembly why his regime has invaded all of its neighbours, without exception, and even countries beyond the region, and waged more than 15 wars during its very short existence.

Why does it continue to show disrespect for dozens of resolutions adopted by the Assembly, while defying almost 100 Security Council resolutions and rejecting many other United Nations resolutions? He himself referred to some of them today and shamefully insulted those organs for adopting such resolutions.

Why does the main State sponsor of terrorism continue to commit terrorist acts, including supporting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham by, inter alia, providing it with arms and other military assistance?

Ironically, he talked about Israel's exceptional capability. Indeed, that regime has exceptional capability, including exceptional capability in committing all core international crimes — genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and crimes of aggression; exceptional capability in aggression and occupation; exceptional capability in barbarism, atrocity and brutality; exceptional capability in killing defenceless women and innocent children; exceptional capability in demolishing homes and destroying schools and hospitals; and exceptional capability in supporting terrorism.

He claimed that his regime had saved many lives in various parts of the world, but he failed to explain why his regime takes the lives of Palestinians on a daily basis. Why does it, as the world's last apartheid regime and warden of the world's largest prison, continue to arrest and imprison thousands of Palestinians and impose the most inhumane blockade against millions of others in the Gaza Strip?

Does he think that by wearing white gloves he can cover up his red hands? Does he think that the world has forgotten the Sabra and Shatila massacre by the Zionist regime of Israel, in which they killed almost 1,000 Palestinian and Lebanese civilians in less than 48 hours? He should have explained why his regime, in addition to possessing a large arsenal of sophisticated conventional weapons, continues to possess all types

of weapons of mass destruction — chemical, biological and nuclear ones.

Why does it continue to refuse to become a party to treaties banning weapons of mass destruction, in particular the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons? All its nuclear activities and installations remain unsafeguarded as a consequence. Why does it reject the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East despite repeated calls by the United Nations, the international community and consensual resolutions of the Assembly over the past 40 years?

One of the questions that he was expected to answer today is why that regime — which is the only possessor of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and also hides behind the hypocritical doctrine of strategic ambiguity — so shamelessly continues to lecture the world about non-proliferation and the dangers of Iran's nuclear programme, whose peaceful nature has continued to be certified regularly by the International Atomic Energy Agency, even following the strict implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Those are all questions that he was expected to answer. Instead, he hypocritically tried to abuse the Assembly by merely accusing others. As the madman believes that all other men are mad, he also tried to stir up anxiety with regard to the JCPOA. Intrinsically and by its very nature, that regime is against resorting to diplomacy and favours only conflicts and wars, which is the main sustenance of its life.

The meeting rose at 9 p.m.